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Loan Exhibition of
Paintings by
Emil Carlsen, N.A.

December, 1919

The Macbeth Gallery
450 Fifth Avenue New York





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Paintings by
Emil Carlsen, N.A.

from the collection of

Robert Handley, Esq.
of New York

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EMIL CARLSEN

Foreword

THE inspiration of the craftsmen of mediæval Europe whose devotion to good workmanship proclaimed the spirit of art before art itself was free, lives on to-day in the work of those artists who, taking full advantage of modern knowledge, work painstakingly, lingeringly, lovingly over the subjects which make to them a special appeal, striving to attain perfection of their modern mediums. Emil Carlsen is an artist of this type. His range is a modest one; indeed his capacity is distinctly limited. Yet his devotion to his ideal of art is beautiful to see, and to approach its realization he labours faithfully and learns from nature many a lesson. He would not know how to cultivate his ego nor how to advertise his soul. It never occurs to him that out of idleness an artist can create a new heaven and a new earth. The old familiar world is good enough for Carlsen, and especially the world where congenial work is its own reward. He loves the past and its relics. Yet, if he copies Gothic saints in stone and terra cotta, and dabbles in tempera like the Florentines, it is not for the joy of antiquarian research but just to make out of old effects some new sensations. He has found that the world is full of sights good to look upon. He has discovered that certain inanimate objects and certain aspects of nature give him particular pleasure. By means of experiments and constant studies he has come to realize the peculiar characteristics of his own observations and has devised and gradually perfected methods for recreating the pleasures of his original impressions.

Sensible self-appraisalment to ascertain where and why one is strong and where and why one is weak is as necessary to artists as it is to other

men. Carlsen knows that he has the patience, the exact science, the subtle skill of the born technician, and so in skilful craftsmanship he exults. Yet he does not believe that he is an artist because of his skill as a draftsman or because he has a distinguished method of laying on the paint. Art is his goal. Craftsmanship is only the road he must travel. He is a craftsman because he believes that before a man can paint a good picture he must be able to do a good job. Believing that practice makes perfect he neither rests on his laurels nor attempts to try the work of other men. Like Chardin, the master who has most inspired him, he keeps on rendering his own selected themes, hoping each year to add new knowledge and a surer competency to his handling. Because he relies upon his labour alone, because he has no new theory to demonstrate but only his own personal taste to express, because he seems to care very little whether people notice him or not, the art of Emil Carlsen seems to me to offer to this age of forced originalities and of false pretensions, genuine novelty and a wholesome example.

It is only perhaps as a painter of "still life" that he achieves extraordinary distinction. In many pictures, both of the sea and of the land, both by sunlight and moonlight, he has shown a power to stir our emotions as only great art can do. However, it is all too often the same emotion and produced by the same technique. We never receive from him the pleasure of surprise, the bracing reaction of shock. One may be excused for wondering whether Carlsen does not care more for texture than for any other quality in painting. The open sea is indeed opaque and Carlsen gives us a true version of its lustrous surface, translucent rather than transparent. Incidentally we cannot fail to note that his water has weight, but all too seldom wetness. In his

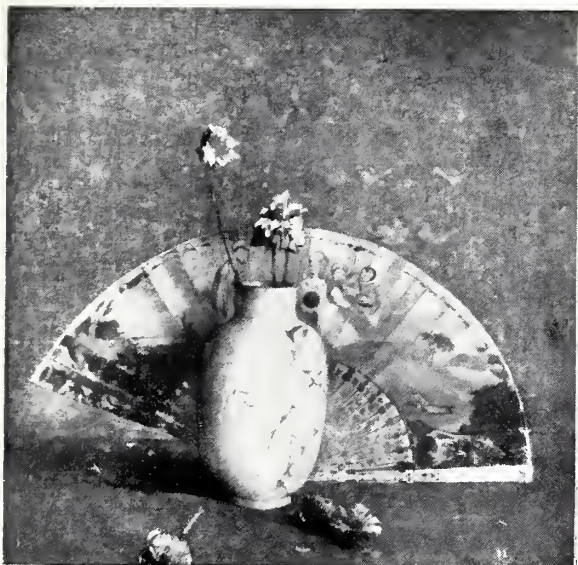
landscapes, he loves best the hours when there is tranquility of light unbroken by sharp transitions and sudden contrasts. Outside of his beloved "still life", such aspects of nature give him his best opportunity for displaying charm of surface—that charm which is the one distinguishing quality of Carlsen, as of Cazin.

It was the glamour of Chardin's painting and his gentle influence which made young Carlsen turn to "still life" instead of practising architecture. At Copenhagen he was trained to be an architect, and this training, no doubt, accounts for the exact draftsmanship which has made him such an admirable teacher of drawing. Upon arrival in this country, at the age of nineteen, without any schooling in the new art, he set out to paint pictures, resolved to learn as he went along, and to go to school to nature all his days. There is not much to tell about the uneventful life of this modern painter of a great tradition. Enthusiastic travel, passionately keen observation through those peering, appraising, kindly eyes of his, endless experiments with new mediums, and discoveries of new effects have made for an ever-increasing perfection of method. His early pictures were rather thin and tight, but of a fine tonality and sensitively observed. In those days no one cared for "still life" and he could not sell his canvases. The world might never have known his landscapes and "marines" if the struggle had not become precarious, so that his friends advised him to abandon "still life" for more popular subjects. Only within the last ten years has he come into his own and painted to an audience of attentive and enthusiastic connoisseurs, critics and fellow-painters who recognize the best work of its kind since Chardin.

From an appreciation by Duncan Phillips, Esq., in the International Studio, June, 1917.



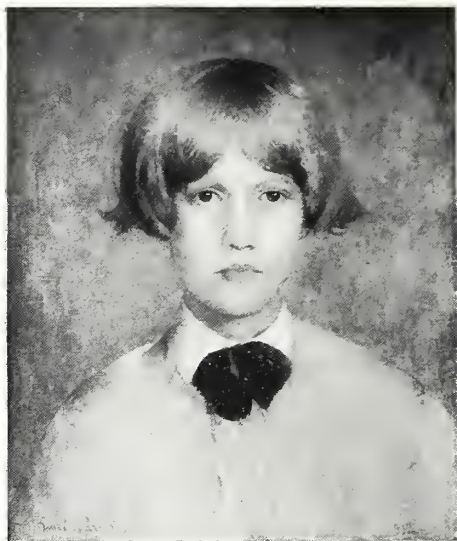
1—MADONNA OF THE MAGNOLIAS



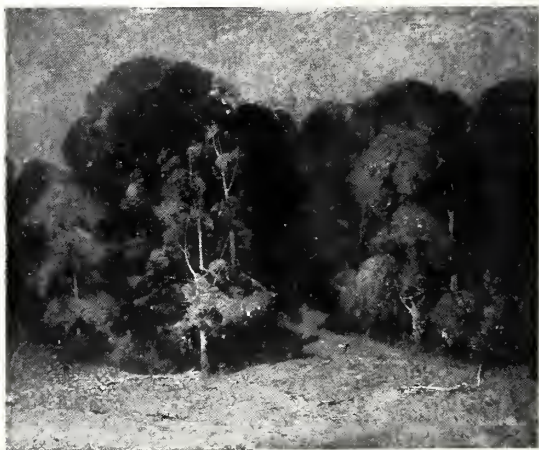
2—THE FAN



3—LATE OCTOBER



4—PORTRAIT OF DINES



5—NIGHT



6—THE JADE BOWL



7—AFTERNOON LIGHT



8—BLUE AND WHITE



9—THE WHITE JUG



10—ROMAN GLASS



11—WOOD INTERIOR



12—ON THE GUIDECCA



13—BLUE AND WHITE JUG AND VASE



14—WOQD INTERIOR NO. 2



15—MARINE

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PAINTINGS

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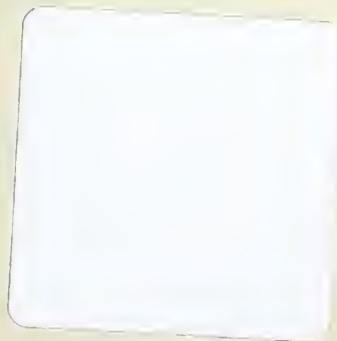
among them the following:-

Betts	Fuller	Miller
Blakelock	Groll	Murphy
Carlsen	Hassam	Olinsky
Carlson	Hawthorne	Ranger
Daingerfield	Henri	Ryder
Davis	Homer	Sartain
Dewing	Howe	Symons
Dougherty	Hunt	Tryon
Eaton	Inness	Twachtman
Foster	Martin	Weir
Frieseke	Melchers	Wiggins
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